Dear Howard, 7/20/76

When your 7/16 came yesterday I was so glad to see it I opened and read it before opening the package from the CIA. However, I read it only to the point where I learned you were okay. I had been concerned but then I realized that is there had been something other than just not enough time I'd have heard from Duane. I then read the CIA letter, skimmed the enclosures and when I finished what I had to do prior to Jim's coming here today returned to your letter and the enclosures. I'll get to them but not until after Jim leaves later today. I've only skimmed, again, without looking at the clips. I can be helpful with some but not in association with some of the others. Besides, I'll be using it with Jim before anyone else can misuse it.

I didn't realise the Lil situation deterioration was as visible as you say. I suppose it is not only the fact of it but also the greater length of time between your visits. It was, as a matter of fact, much on my mind last night when I got to reading your letter. There would be no extraordinary problem for me if I were not completely persuaded that she is sick and innocent in her sickness. I can't tell myself she is a bitch. She isn't. Basically she is a fine person. In our earlier days she was great. Our marriage was good. When the going got tough she was the toughest. And very able. There is no way of recovering or reliving that but I also can't forget it. Aside from her innocence in her ilness I owe her very much. And I am and for some years have been aware that if there is a question of fault it is mine. I should have recognized that she was sick but did not. I had faith in doctors and never tried to figure out what they did not address. I look back on it now and wonder how I could have. So there really is no way that I can fault here and I can't find relief in blaming her. The combination makes for insolubility. I just can't throw here out and the way I live is impossible.

She not only can't control her attitudes and acts, she doesn't want to. She has created a whole unreal reality to the degree where everything she does is spontaneously natural for her. She doesn't stop to think how to be at cross-purposes. It is now her natural reaction. It permeates everything, no matter how simple. There is nothing I now dare ask of her and less I dare accept if she offers it. Like yesterday, when she said she had some copying to do. I did have some I was accumulating. It was a mistake because again when there was a chance of doing it in a way that might make problems for me she had to do it that one way and when I noticed that she was mixing up discovery papers I had to keep in their sequence (they have no inventory numbers) I stopped her twice. Twice she started to doe precisely what I asked her not to do. The third time I blew up and told her to leave it alone.

While most of the time I can and do control myself on these things yesterday the other tensions were great and there had been a series of affronts I had ignored but felt. When this was added to them all it become too much. I remained quite shaken for hours. It is still oppressive, made more so from the apparent insolubility and the fact that it has grown to such extremes that it is sometimes physically dangerous to me. This refers to the outside, the work I once enjoyed as remains good for me. It simply is not possible that the hazards she has created for me were not within her understanding. In fact when I have been vocal she would immediately and intensively address herself to a minor one and having made a start never again return to it. I will resolve them all in time, having no alternative. It will require doing what I do not want to do - just eliminating what presents physical hazards and work beyond my capacity.

Do not be deceived by "capacity." I lost track of the time I mowed by hand yesterday. It was not on the steepest land so I didn't feel it in my muscles. I did if for an hour. Not bad physical capability for my age and condition. I'm not a cripple or really incapacitated. It takes me a little time to get ready now to avoid another infestation of chiggers. I have no problem taking that time. And I came back without chiggers.

The situation is worse and is deteriorating. She has created a structure in which this amounts to her survival need, the urgency of a twisted self-concept. Her self-respect requires the destruction of mine. So there is no means too petty and in no case, I am certain, does she do any of this with premeditation. Meanwhile, she is devoutly persuaded that she does not do what she does-even when she is going it. That bad. More later,